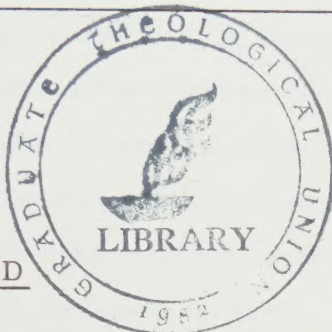


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THE NEW ARCHBISHOP
OF CANTERBURY APPOINTED
By Lalit Adolphus

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October 5, 1979

LONDON -- The Rt. Rev. Robert Runcie, Bishop of St. Albans, is to be the Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of All England in succession to Dr. Donald Coggan who retires on January 25, 1980.

Although he felt "terrified and helpless" at his appointment, the Archbishop-elect told a packed press conference in Church House, London, soon after the announcement, that he regarded his new calling as the will of God. And in spite of his trepidation he says he should "enjoy" his new job.

Bishop Runcie is the first Archbishop of Canterbury to have been chosen by representatives of the Church of England rather than by the Prime Minister. His name was one of two forwarded to the Prime Minister by the Crown Appointments Commissions--composed of representatives of the bishops, clergy and laity of the Church of England -- under the new procedure for the election of the Archbishop laid down about two years ago.

In accordance with constitutional practice, Bishop Runcie was formally nominated by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister for election by the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury.

Expressing his thoughts on his role in national life, Bishop Runcie told the press conference: "The Archbishop can no longer assume that he will be heard and heeded as of right on the great issues of national life. But he must comment and if he is to speak effectively, he must make sure he sees a wide cross-section of people both from outside and inside the Christian Church." He announced his intention to create around him an effective team of people "so that when I speak I am not a platitude machine."

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Referring to his role in the worldwide Anglican Communion, the Primate-designate said he saw it not in terms of a "papal style of leadership," which was alien to the Anglican ethos, but as one based on "the closest consultation between leaders of the Anglican Churches."

Making an unequivocal commitment to Christian unity, Bishop Runcie reminded his audience that as co-chairman of the Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission he had been "very concerned with ecumenical relations." Bishop Runcie, who recently toured several East European countries to visit Orthodox patriarchs, expressed the hope that he would soon have the opportunity to meet the Pope. He was equally anxious to achieve unity with Protestant churches, he said.

He said that on balance he was against the ordination of women for the present. The issue, he said, "called for deeper theological reflection and a greater consensus than had so far been achieved."

Asked to define his theological position in the Church of England, he said he was usually described as "moderate" and although old labels were now outdated, he would, if pressed, call himself a "radical Catholic."

He criticized liberal theological works such as Honest to God and The Myth of God Incarnate, because of what he described as "their negative approach to the central tenets of the Christian faith." On those central tenets he said he would call himself a conservative.

Bishop Runcie warned the Church against dangers on two fronts. "There are signs that a ghetto-minded Church may be emerging. There are contrary signs of the emergence of a Church that is just the echo of fashionable trends. Both these must be resisted. . . . The ghetto Church is getting out of touch with the mainstream of national life and thought. . . but there is no wisdom in the Church becoming the dull echo of fashionable liberal notions. . . . We cannot be radical unless we are rooted in the tradition."

Bishop Runcie, who is 57 and married with two children, had a distinguished academic career at Oxford and Cambridge and was awarded the MC for bravery in the Second World War. He spent ten years as principal of Cuddesdon College before becoming Bishop of St. Albans in 1970.

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Among other things he served for the last six years as chairman of the Central Religious Advisory Committee of the BBC and IBA. He has been co-chairman of the Anglican Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission since 1973.

His recreations are travel, reading novels -- especially Iris Murdoch and P. G. Wodehouse -- and keeping pigs.

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